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+ DR. EDWARD U. CONDON +

+ AND HIS AMAZING U.F.O. REPORT +

+ By Ron Toft +

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Intelligent beings - perhaps structurally and metabolically radically different from us - could exist elsewhere in the Universe. In fact, according to current scientific opinion, the chances are they probably do. But.....they cannot visit Earth for at least another 10,000 years. Why? Because American scientist Dr. Edward U. Condon says so.

Highly respected by his colleagues and Government officials, this was the man who headed the two-year investigation into U.F.O.s at the University of Colorado.

The conclusions reached by Condon and his team have already been made public. U.F.O.s exist alright, they readily admit. But they don't come from outer space. Their report was presented to a special review panel of the National Academy of Sciences - and accepted in its entirety. The panel was chaired by Dr. Gerald M. Clemence of Yale University. Members included specialists in physics, astronomy, meteorology and psychology. The panel found "that this has been a very creditable effort to apply objectively the relevant techniques of science to the solution of the U.F.O. problem. The report recognizes that there remain U.F.O. sightings that are not easily explained. The report does suggest, however, so many reasonable and possible directions in which an explanation may eventually be found, that there seems to be no reason to attribute them to an extra-terrestrial source without evidence that is much more convincing. On the basis of present knowledge the least likely explanation of U.F.O.s is the hypothesis of extra-terrestrial visitations by intelligent beings".

The Condon report has now been published word for word in paperback format. Entitled: "The Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects", it costs 12s 6d. Almost two inches thick, the Bantam book contains a phenomenal 961 pages - plus some extraordinary "facts" and recommendations, an example of which was given in my opening paragraph.

Does Condon have absolute proof that alien life-forms could not possibly visit Earth within the next 10,000 years? The answer is a firm "no". All he has is weak circumstantial evidence. In his 43-page long "Summary of the Study" Condon explains that light travels at 186,000 miles per second, covering nearly six million million miles during the course of one Earth year. But even at this speed it still takes 4.2 years to reach the nearest star, excluding the sun, which is Proxima Centauri. More astronomical facts are mustered. The Milky Way, the catherine wheel like galaxy in which we live, is 80,000 light years in diameter. Other star systems are millions of

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light years distant. Having convinced the reader of the immensity of the Universe, that even the nearest stars are tremendously remote, Condon goes on to say: "Even assuming that difficulties of this sort could be overcome, we have no right to assume that in life communities everywhere there is a steady evolution in the directions of both greater intelligence and greater technological competence. Human beings now know enough to destroy all life on Earth, and they may lack the intelligence to work out social controls to keep themselves from doing so. If other civilisations have the same limitation then it might be that they develop to the point where they destroy themselves utterly before they have developed the technology needed to enable them to make long space voyages". After further sheer speculation on possible social priorities and intelligent life-span of alien civilisations, Condon sums up: "We feel it is safe to assume that no intelligent extra-terrestrial life outside of our solar-system has any possibility of visiting Earth in the next 10,000 years".

It is here that Condon has committed a cardinal scientific sin. He assumes that aliens could not visit Earth. How often have we heard scientists say: 'You cannot afford to assume anything. We deal only in facts'.

True, it would be impossible for Man to reach even the nearest star with the ungainly chemical rockets he has at present. But just because we don't happen to have a more efficient method of propulsion doesn't mean that other intelligences haven't. Condon, and indeed many other scientists, preach that interstellar travel is impossible. Yet how many times during the course of history have "established" principles been shattered by new discoveries. One has only to look back at the 20's and 30's. Any talk of travelling to the planets was considered absurd. Yet today it is virtually a reality. Man will achieve interstellar travel - one day. Who can say what older and wiser civilisations in other parts of the galaxy have already accomplished.

One wonders why Condon and his team even bothered to investigate U.F.O.s if they believed from the outset that aliens couldn't visit us. Even more puzzling is why Condon chose "10,000 years". It could have been hardly more than a figure chosen at random to reassure the public and the U.S. Government. For how on earth could Condon know what manner of beings inhabit the depths of space, let alone what spacecraft they have and what forms of energy they have harnessed.

Condon shoots down the spacecraft theory of U.F.O.s completely and adds: "Our general conclusion is that nothing has come from the study of U.F.O.s in the past 21 years that has added to our scientific knowledge". Another amazing statement. Even if all U.F.O.s were natural phenomena or hallucinations on the part of witnesses, science would surely benefit from a thorough investigation. There is much about the atmosphere and the human mind which we still do not know. He goes on to point out that in his team's opinion "further extensive study of U.F.O.s cannot be justified in the expectation that science will be advanced thereby". What absolute rubbish.

In my opinion the most ridiculous and disturbing recommendation in the whole report is that teachers - American at any rate - should stop their students reading U.F.O. material. Says Condon: "Many children are being allowed, if not actively encouraged, to devote their science study time to the reading of U.F.O. books and magazine articles. We feel that children are educationally harmed by absorbing unsound and erroneous material as if it were scientifically well founded. Such study is harmful not merely because of the erroneous nature of the material itself, but also because such study retards the development of a critical faculty with regard to scientific

evidence which to some degree ought to be part of the education of every American. We strongly recommend that teachers refrain from giving students credit for school work based on their reading of the presently available U.F.O. books and magazine articles. Teachers who find their students strongly motivated in this direction should attempt to channel their interests in the direction of serious study of astronomy and meteorology".

To restrict a student's reading matter, irrespective of how perverse it may be, is unthinkable - a step towards communism. If this recommendation is implemented it will undoubtedly be a step backwards in American education. A student should be allowed to read any books and magazines he wishes - and form his own opinion of them - not have his mind made up for him.

The University of Colorado U.F.O. project cost American taxpayers around half-a-million dollars. Was it worthwhile? I think so. It was the first time a really scientific study of the U.F.O. problem had been carried out and may well result in other scientists carrying out similar research. Condon and his team did a considerable amount of research - if nothing else. But they examined only a small percentage of U.F.O. reports, and these were mainly American. Ideally, an international U.F.O. research council, composed of scientists, should be set up. I'm afraid I cannot accept any of the Condon report's conclusions and recommendations. Why? As I have said before, every year from all over the world come reports which defy logical explanation. Reports which tell of strange disc-shaped craft travelling at colossal speeds. Reports which tell of encounters with intelligent beings from another world. Fantastic? Preposterous? Ridiculous? Yet people from all walks of life, often separated from each other by thousands of miles, have seen these objects in the sky, have seen them land, and have met their occupants. Is it not more fantastic to believe that all these people are either lying or have some mental or optical defect?

DID LIFE BEGIN IN SPACE: The commonly held belief that life originated in or near Earth's primeval oceans may have to be abandoned - following a discovery by a team of astronomers at the National Radio Astronomy Observatory, Green Bank, West Virginia, U.S.A.

The astronomers' instruments have picked up huge clouds of formaldehyde both inside and outside our galaxy, The Milky Way. Formaldehyde is an organic compound containing carbon - the basis of all terrestrial life. This discovery may mean that biological molecules could build up in space and then rain down on the surfaces of planets where, over millions of years, they could develop into complex organisms.

If this theory is correct life may be an extremely common phenomena in the Universe - according to Professor Thomas Gold, of Cornell University, New York.

THERE IS WATER ON MARS: Exobiologists were somewhat disheartened by the pictures of Mars sent back to Earth in 1965 by the highly successful American space probe Mariner 4. For they showed a dead looking surface pockmarked with craters - resembling the Moon rather than Earth.

But now the possibility of life on the Red Planet has been revived by astronomers at the McDonald Observatory in Texas. They claim to have "conclusive proof" that there is water in the Martian atmosphere. Water is essential to life as we know it; so the discovery, if confirmed, is encouraging to say the least. Observatory Director Dr. Harlan Smith says the humidity of the Martian atmosphere is equivalent to a cubic mile of water. This would be sufficient to produce damp areas on the planet where small organisms could thrive.

TELEVISION SPACE SPECTACULAR: A 2½ hour television spectacular on astronomy is being screened on April 17. Called "The Violent Universe" it will be shown in colour on BBC 2. It will go on record as the longest and most ambitious programme of its kind ever seen on British television. Viewers will be shown a scale model of a small section of space - 43 ft. by 37 ft. by 27 ft. - each foot representing three light years (equivalent to about 18 million million miles).

ANGLO-AUSTRALIAN TELESCOPE: An Anglo-Australian astronomical observatory, housing a 156-inch reflecting telescope, is to be built at Siding Springs, Coonabarabran, New South Wales. The Science Research Council is responsible for the British share of the £4.4 million project. Sir Howard Grubb Parsons & Co. Ltd. of Newcastle-upon-Tyne will grind and polish the optical components of the telescope and construct the huge tube. The contract is worth about £650,000 and will take 2½ years to complete.

TEN MANNED MOON LANDINGS: Space chiefs in America are planning ten manned lunar landings - the first scheduled for July. The initial flights will involve perfecting landing techniques and the setting up of mini-laboratories on the Moon's surface, which will radio data back to Earth long after the astronauts have left. On later flights there will be overland exploration.

LIFE ON MOON?: American scientist Dr. Jack Green, who worked on the "Surveyor" series of lunar soft-landing craft, believes that sulphur may be present on the Moon - after examining photographs of the landscape in the vicinity of the huge crater Aristarchus.

"If this holds true, there could be large areas near volcanic craters which are warm and moist and conceivably support small organisms". Aristarchus, 28 miles in diameter, is situated near the Moon's eastern limb (as seen in an inverting telescope).

ROYALTY AND U.F.O.s: Prince Philip is interested in U.F.O.s and has just obtained a copy of the book "Scientific Study of Unidentified Flying Objects", the subject of the main story in this month's bulletin.

U.F.O. TALK: A talk on U.F.O.s was given by S.I.G.A.P. Chairman Omar Fowler on February 13 to about 30 members of the 18 Plus Farnham Group, a youth organisation. The meeting was held in the Albion Public House, Farnham and went down very well.

FIELD VAN ON LOAN: The field van belonging to the British U.F.O. Research Association (B.U.F.O.R.A.) is now on loan to S.I.G.A.P. "for several months". Many members will remember that the van was present at last year's skywatch at Guildford and a centre of attraction at the "Daily Mail" New Year Show at Olympia. It is being kept in Omar Fowler's car port.

SKYWATCH DAY: This year's National Skywatch Day will be held on Saturday, June 28. Full details will appear in the May and June bulletins.

NEXT MEETING: The next S.I.G.A.P. meeting will be held on Tuesday, April 15. It is hoped to have an informal panel discussion on various aspects of ufology. The meeting will be held, as usual, in the canteen of the Plastic Coatings Factory, (off the Woodbridge Meadows By-Pass) Guildford, starting at 8 p.m.

S.I.G.A.P.'s annual meeting will be held on May 6, same place, same time. As members are unlikely to receive their bulletins before this date next month, this is the final reminder. New members can be sure of a warm welcome at all S.I.G.A.P. meetings.

U.F.O. SEMINAR: A U.F.O. seminar is being held at Cambridge University on Saturday, April 19. The aim is to train BUFORA members in the thorough investigation and evaluation of U.F.O. reports with the possibility at some future date of helping with special investigations. The meeting will be held in the Bevin Room at Churchill College. S.I.G.A.P. Chairman Omar Fowler and one or two other representatives from our group are expected to attend. A full report will appear in next month's bulletin.

U.F.O.s ON TELEVISION: According to a report in the current issue of the "Merseyside U.F.O. Bulletin", television astronomer Patrick Moore, well known for his "Sky at Night" programmes, is to interview journalist and dedicated U.F.O. researcher Arthur Shuttlewood on BBC 2 on May 10. Apparently Patrick Moore and a television team visited Warminster, once scene of intense U.F.O. activity, on January 31 and did some filmed interviews on Cradle Hill. In a letter to the "Merseyside U.F.O. Bulletin" Shuttlewood says: "This may be something of a breakthrough for all our earnest efforts, because the BBC team came up to Cradle Hill with us last night. I will leave the programme to describe what they all saw, including Patrick Moore, whom I met and was interviewed by for the first time.... Now that Patrick Moore and the BBC have visited us, with results that shocked and pleased them, I feel meekly satisfied". Moore is renowned for his negative attitude towards U.F.O.s, so the programme should be interesting!

SCIENCE FINALLY GIVES U.F.O.s NOD: This was the headline above an interesting article on U.F.O.s which appeared in an Arkansas, U.S.A. newspaper on January 3: "The dreamers always must precede the doers across new horizons. The ethical scientist has opinions, preconceptions, but dares not acknowledge them even to his colleagues. To the professional scientist all new ideas are theoretical until they are supportable with conclusive evidence. There is no conclusive evidence about "flying-saucers". Most men of science, therefore, have expressed either disdain or disinterest in the subject. The handful of bona fide scientists who did want to speculate on UFOs found themselves in the uncomfortable company of pseudoscientists, commercial cultists, pulp booksellers and crackpots. Last December's issue of the respected "Journal of Aeronautics and Astronautics" changed all that. In this technical publication the bigwigs subscribed to this very meaningful conclusion: "UFO phenomena cannot be resolved without quantitative scientific study; this matter merits the attention of scientists and engineers". Suddenly the pooh-poohers were themselves refuted. Suddenly, officially, all Air Force and other studies conducted heretofore were adjudged inadequate. Suddenly such men as Dr. James McDonald felt less alone. Dr. McDonald, a physicist, head of the department of meteorology, University of Arizona, has been in the forefront of those urging "quantitative study". Inevitably now the evidence he and others have collected will be properly evaluated. Dr. Allen Hyneck, head of the department of astronomy, Northwestern University, now freely confesses his own "conversion". He says: "I can no longer dismiss the U.F.O. phenomenon with a shrug".

(Credit: U.F.O.R.C., Seattle, Washington).
